

Transcript of President's San Clemente News Conference on Domestic Matters

Following is a transcript of President Nixon's news conference in San Clemente, Calif., yesterday, as recorded by The New York Times through the facilities of ABC News:

EXERTS:

5. Subpoenaing of News Material

Q. In the background of this question is the effort of a Congressional subcommittee to subpoena film which was made for, but never used, in a news documentary. A. By C. B. S.

Q. By C. B. S. Also N. B. C. has some film which was being cut. Also in the background are various pressures and counter-pressure which some of us believe we see from your Administration. In December, 1969, it was published in, the U. S. Senate Policy Committee issued the following statement as a matter of their policy.

The question is whether you agree or disagree with this, and also I'd like to get your comments on this general area of subpoenaing newsmen's notes and unused film. This policy communication of yours says, "Whether news is fair or unfair, objective or biased, accurate or challenged, is left to the consciences of the commentators, producers and network officials themselves. Government does not and cannot play any role in its presentation." End of quotation.

A. Let me address myself first to the quotation. I think the question states a principle that most Americans would support. However, I do not believe that that means that network commentators or newspaper reporters—as distinguished from editorial writers who, of course, have a right to every bias and should express such bias—are above criticism. The criticism—and they shouldn't be sensitive about it—as far as, now when you go, however, to the question of subpoenaing the notes of reporters, when you go to the question of Government action which requires the revealing of sources, then I take a very jaundiced view of that kind of action. Unless, unless it is strictly—and this would be a very narrow area—strictly in the area where there was a major crime had been committed and where the subpoenaing of the notes had to do with information dealing directly with that crime.

As you know, that is provided for in many states at the present time. But as far as the subpoenaing of notes are concerned, a reporter's, as far as bringing any pressure on the networks as the Government is concerned, I do not support that. I believe, however, that each of us as a public figure has a right to indicate when we think the news coverage has been fair or unfair.

Generally speaking, I also feel that I do not have to say much about that because regardless of what I say you're going to say anything you want about me. And it usually may not be very good.

6. Domestic Wiretapping

Q. Mr. President, regarding the use of wiretaps in domestic security matters.

A. The kind that you don't have a subpoena, in other words.

Q. Right. Without court orders.

A. Right.

Q. The Attorney General has stated the policy on that and he has been criticized by Congressman Emanuel Celler of New York, who says that this could lead to a police state. Would you comment on the threat of a police state in the use of this type of activity?

A. Well, I have great respect for Congressman Celler as a lawyer and, as, of course, the dean, as you know, he is the dean of all the Congressmen in the House, a very distinguished Congressman.

However, in this respect I would only say, "Where was he in 1961, where was he in 1962, where was he in 1963?" Today, right today, at this moment there are one half as many taps as there were in 1961, '62 and '63 and 10 times as many news stories about them.

Now, there wasn't a police state in 1961 and '62 and '63 in my opinion, because even then there were less than 100 taps and there are less than 50 today. And there is none now at the present time. All of this hysteria—and it is hysteria and much of it, of course, is political demagoguery to the effect that "the F.B.I. is tapping my telephone," and the rest—simply doesn't serve the public purpose.

In my view, the taps which are always approved by the Attorney General in a very limited area, dealing with those who would use violence or other means to overthrow the Government, and limited as they are at the present time to less than 50 at any one time, I think they're justified. And I think that the 200 million people in this country do not need to be concerned that the F.B.I., which has been, with all the criticism of it, which has a fine record of being nonpolitical, nonpartisan, and

which is recognized throughout the world as probably the best police force in the world. The people of this country should be thankful that we have an F.B.I. that is so greatly restricted in this respect.

This is not a police state. I've been to police states. I know what they are and I think the best thing that could happen to some of the Congressmen and Senators and others who talk about police states is to take a trip—I mean a trip abroad, of course—and when they go abroad, try a few police states.

This isn't a police state and it isn't going to become one. I should also point this out. Where were some of the critics in 1968 when there was Army surveillance of the Democratic National Committee — at the convention, I mean.

We've stopped that. This Administration is against any kind of repression, any kind of action that infringes on the right of privacy. However, we are for and I will always be for that kind of action that is necessary to protect this country from those who would imperil the peace that all the people are entitled to enjoy.

great!